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LETTER DATED 24 SEPTEMBER 1998 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF IRAQ TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

On instructions from my Government, I have the honour to inform you as follows:

1. On 23 August 1998 two armed naval vessels flying the flag of the United States and each carrying 20 armed United States troops with full military equipment and single- and double-barrelled machine-guns together with a salvage vessel searched Iraqi launches in the Khawr Abd Allah area (from the Alam al-Mashhuni area in a westerly direction towards the buoys) claiming that they were searching for concealed Iraqi weapons and equipment.

2. At 0900 hours on 7 September 1998 the Iraqi vessel Al-Abid left the Umm Qasr silo heading for the Basrah silo with a cargo of 1,494 tons of grain under the 'oil-for-food' programme. At 2340 hours, while in Iraqi territorial waters, it was intercepted by United States forces. At 0230 hours on 8 September the vessel and its crew were forcibly taken on a bearing of 170 degrees south towards an unknown destination with the crew still on board. The members of the crew are:

1. Shihab Hamzah Abbas, master
2. Abd al-Rasul Hajji Umran, third officer
3. Shihab Ahmad Taha, third officer
4. Abd al-Waddud Khalil Fathi, petty officer
5. Zahir Habib Abbas, electrician
6. Fadil Kazim Badiwi, first seaman
7. Samir Majid Nasir, first seaman
8. Yasir Tahir Yusr, oiler
9. Kazim Abd al-Husayn, oiler

10. Adnan Abd al-Karim Abbas, laboratory examiner

11. Muhammad Abd al-Sadah Hasan, laboratory examiner

12. Mahdi Salih Salman, auditor

13. Hasan Zahraw Hasan, auditor

At 0945 hours on 8 September all the ships papers of the vessel Al-Abid were returned to its master and it was released without incident.

I request your intervention with the United States of America with a view to bringing a halt to violations and provocative and unjustifiable behaviour that have become more frequent in recent times, given that they constitute actions that are in violation of the Charter of the United Nations and the provisions of international law and pose a threat to the sovereignty and security of a State member of the United Nations.

In accordance with the principle of State responsibility, I affirm the legally established right of the Republic of Iraq to seek legal compensation for the damage caused to it and to its nationals by such actions.

I should be grateful if you would have this letter circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Nizar HAMDOON
Ambassador
Permanent Representative